



From Cape Town to Germany:

Guest Professor Kevin Johnston feels at home in Pforzheim

Professor Kevin Johnston visited the Business School Pforzheim as guest lecturer for three weeks. In the Interview with the student reporter Felix Fürst he tells about his stay, the importance of international experience, and what he likes most about Pforzheim.

BY FELIX FÜRST

Prof Johnston, you have visited our Business School many times. What makes you always want to come back to Pforzheim?

Quite a lot of things. To me, coming to Pforzheim is like going on holiday. But more than that it's meeting the people who I've met before. I've developed friends and that has made it a very, very pleasant place to be. I really look forward to my annual visit to Pforzheim, I always bring my wife with me, we've loved coming to Pforzheim.

It also has given me the opportunity to do some research and to try some new things which has been very nice. Professor Harald Strotmann has been very good and has allowed me to try some weird experiments here, so for example I think I was the first person here to have online exams. I also think I was the first to make it mandatory that every student in the class has to have a phone or tablet on at all times.

So, in short, Pforzheim has given me a sanctuary, a place away from the madness of my day to day life, because it's somewhere else, it's kind of like a holiday, it's kind of like family and it's a place to explore and try new things.

You are used to the busy city life in Cape Town, how do you get along in small and calm Pforzheim?

I think both places have attractions and both are very different. Cape Town is larger, obviously has more people. It has sun and sand and sea and all those different things, but you know, I don't go to the beach every week. Pforzheim is different because it's cold, much colder than South Africa which gives one a nice difference and it's compact, everything is in one place. I walk from the Hotel to the Hochschule in the mornings and I sometimes walk back as well, depending on the weather.

If you compare the University of Cape Town to our Business School – where do you see the biggest differences?

The biggest differences, I guess, are in the number of students, and in that yours is free. Our students pay, so we have a lot of issues with students who struggle to pay fees, who struggle to find money et cetera. Those are probably the biggest differences. You also appear to have more money than what we do in terms of your facilities and latest technologies.

Many of your MBA students here in Pforzheim are internationals from all over the world. Do you think that internationalization and globalization are crucial developments nowadays and therefore very important experiences for students?

Yes, one hundred percent. I've been very lucky, I've been to about 65 countries in the world and internationalization and globalization are very, very important because you see different things and you see different perspectives. In 2001, I was privileged to visit the headquarters of one of the big tech companies, Cisco. One thing I noticed while sitting around the table, there were 12 people from Cisco, and I actually asked: "How many of you were born in the USA?", and it was only three. The other nine were born somewhere else, and I think that's what makes the USA and companies like Cisco successful, because if you all are from the same town, you all went to the same school, you all went to the same church, you all have the same way of thinking and new ideas don't come easily.

If you had to describe our Business School with 3 words – which would it be?

Dynamic. International. Welcoming. I think you got a very nice staff complement at the university. I have been coming here for so many years and some of the administrative staff are very nice, warm and friendly kind of people who help and assist you. That also makes it easier for guest lecturers to fit in.

You might have learned some German during your visits. Which is your favorite German word or phrase?

»Alles gut.«

FELIX FÜRST AND LIA SOPHIE WILMES

are student assistants at Pforzheim Business School. They are studying Corporate Communication Management (Master's Program).

Founded in 1829, **University of Cape Town** is South Africa's oldest university. The university is one of Africa's leading teaching and research institutions and has six faculties – Commerce, Engineering & the Built Environment, Law, Health Sciences, Humanities and Science which addresses students' teaching and learning needs. Not only have the UCT and Hochschule Pforzheim a great partnership but also the Pforzheim students' initiative initiAID has strong connections to Cape Town where initiAID has raised a couple of charitable projects.

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